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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 002773

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2018

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S POLICY UNIT DEALS WITH FUTURE, PAST
POLITICAL AGENDAS

REF: PRETORIA 2607

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Classified By: DEPUTY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MADELINE Q. SEIDENSTRICKER FO
R REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (S//NF) Policy analysts in the Presidency's Policy Unit are working on a host of projects that offer insight into the clash of ideas the South African Government is currently dealing with. The President's Policy Unit, which is the most prestigious and important decision-making body for the government, is currently focused on preparing President Kgalema Motlanthe's presidential address for the opening of Parliament in early February and on drafting papers on the future of the country's domestic and foreign policies. The crux of Motlanthe's address most likely will reflect what the African National Congress (ANC) hopes to achieve under the presidency of Jacob Zuma. The work on the future of the country's domestic and foreign policies, at least in a few instances, reflects what former President Thabo Mbeki hoped to achieve during his time in office. The tension of ideas at the highest level of government underscores the difficulty in transitioning from the Mbeki administration to the Motlanthe, and most likely, the Zuma administration. End Summary.

Some of Zuma's ANC Interests . . .

[¶2.](#) (S//NF) Policy unit analyst Thabileng Mothabi, one of several drafters for Motlanthe's state of the nation address, told Poloff in a meeting on December 11 the speech would focus on the core of the campaign agenda as per instruction from the ANC and from Zuma. The Unit's analysts have been told to draft language that underscores the progress the government has made in health, education, crime, and job creation -- all of which have been key ANC themes in recent months. Mothabi said the speech would be "what the ANC wants us to tell the government." He complained, "I have been so busy getting the data for that speech." (Note: He also noted that, more than likely, Motlanthe would not read the speech ahead of address. Mothabi said, "Motlanthe's style when we give him speeches is just to read what is in front of him." End Note.) He said the ultimate purpose of the speech is to set up Zuma so his mandate for governing will be clear

to the people. In a meeting on December 29, Mothabi told PolCouns and Poloff that the Unit is working on the ANC's policy manifesto. He cautioned that the manifesto, scheduled to be revealed next week, would be "full of promises" that will be hard for the ruling party to meet. (Note: The fact the Unit, still dominated by Mbeki allies, is helping to draft the manifesto raises questions about whether the ANC is driving policy or the Union Buildings is driving policy. Many commentators have assumed the ANC is driving policy, but if the Unit is helping craft the manifesto it would call such assumptions into question. End Note.)

. . . Some of Mbeki's Interests

¶3. (S//NF) At a meeting on December 22, Mothabi shared with Poloff a copy of a paper he is working on for Deputy Director General of Policy Coordination and Advisory Services for the Presidency Vusi Gumede. The paper, which is still in draft form, focuses on the importance of continuing the "African Renaissance" concepts of domestic and foreign policy promoted by Mbeki beginning in the late 1990s. (Note: "African Renaissance" is an ideology that promotes social cohesion, democracy, economic development, and the establishment of Africa as a world leader in global affairs. End Note.) The draft reportedly was requested by Director of the Unit, Joel Netshitenzhe. The paper highlights what the "African Renaissance" has achieved for South Africa and for the continent both in theoretical and quantitative terms. Some critics have argued that "African Renaissance" is a cover for South African neo-colonialism on the continent. Mothabi has admitted that such a vision may underpin South African Government policies. In past meetings, Mothabi has said the

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Unit shares a vision of "South African nationalism" that on the face of it could override the push for greater dialogue and cooperation among liberation movements, which so far has been the foreign policy posture of the Zuma-led ANC. (See Reftel). Mothabi noted that behind much of what is written on the "African Renaissance" is the idea that "South African policies first and foremost should benefit South Africa." (Note: To illustrate this point Mothabi asked Poloff who Mbeki represented in Zimbabwe. He asked, rhetorically, "If he doesn't represent the South African Government, if he doesn't represent the ANC, who does he represent? He represents South African business." End Note.) Mothabi said those in the Unit now, probably because they are Mbeki allies, want the "African Renaissance" concepts to continue even though "there may not be those in the ANC now interested in continuing them."

Comment

¶4. (S//NF) Comments from analysts in the Presidency's Policy Unit show how the South African Government is dealing with a tension of ideas. On the one hand, the Unit is crafting a speech for Motlanthe that reflects the future goals of the Zuma-led ANC. On the other, the Unit is drafting work that reflects the past ideals of Mbeki. Despite the Unit's interest in highlighting the importance of continuing the "African Renaissance" concepts of domestic and foreign policy, there are few signs Zuma and the ANC have interest in doing so. Zuma's perspective is much more centered on domestic concerns ahead of the election, and his actions so far have not deviated much from the Mbeki line. Yet, there is clear interest from Zuma and from the ANC that they want Motlanthe to set up the new administration so it can successfully govern after the election next year. Some pundits and political analysts have characterized the tension of ideas, or the "two centers of power," that emerged after Polokwane as having paralyzed the government. The Unit's

work demonstrates that the government is not paralyzed, rather evolving slowly. This tension of ideas probably is more healthy than not for the Unit, and for the country, as in recent years the government's policy wonks served mainly as mouthpieces for Mbeki.

BOST